

***The Institution of Engineers, Australia: Sydney Division
Engineering Heritage Committee***

Oral History Program: Biographical Notes

**Barry M LEE (1933-)
Fire Protection Engineer**

- Birth & Family:** Born Elsternwick, Melbourne, on the 26th November 1933. His Father was a compositor in a printing business and later a manager and his Mother was an army nurse, serving largely in the Pacific Islands during WWII. He had one sister.
- Education:** Primary and Secondary - Christian Brothers College, St Kilda, Melbourne
Matriculation - St Kevin's, Melbourne
- Qualifications:** Fellowship Diploma, Mechanical Engineering, Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT) (1951 – 1956).
Graduate (with Distinction), The Institute of Fire Engineers, UK. (Completed in 1958).
- Memberships:** Associate Member of The Institute of Fire Engineers, UK
Past Member of the Board of Directors of The Society of Fire Protection Engineers, USA and Past President (Australasian Chapter). (*Alignment problems here and following*)
Member of the Royal Society of Health, UK.
Member of the Fire Protection Association, UK.
Member of the National Fire Protection Association, USA, Committees on Sprinkler System Discharge and Sprinkler System I Installation Criteria.
Member of the Australian Committee, Det Norske Veritas, and an Independent Member of DNVQuality Assurance Committee.
Member of the Australian Technical Committee, Lloyd's Register of Shipping.
Member of the Advisory Committee, Swinburne University of Technology, B Tech (Fire) degree programme and oversight of post-graduate qualifications requirements.
Deputy Chairman of Industry Liaison Committee, Australian Building Codes Board.
- Awards:** Fellow Society of Fire Protection Engineers, USA, "in recognition of significant accomplishment and stature in engineering" 1982.
Medal of the Order of Australia in the General Division, "for services to industry, particularly in the area of fire protection" 1990. (*Alignment*)
United Nations Environment Programme Citation of Excellence, 1989, "in recognition of outstanding contribution to the protection of the Earth's ozone layer." (*Alignment*) Recipient of Inaugural Standards Award, 1993, Standards Association of Australia. (*Alignment*)

Work History:

Barry suspects that his career in engineering sprang from an interest in science and chemistry. He spent three months working in the insurance industry and discovered that he was particularly interested in the fire side of the business. Seeing a future in the technical side, he enrolled in engineering. His time at RMIT was disrupted by a period of national service in the 14th National Service Battalion.

A few months after starting his engineering course at RMIT in 1951 Barry joined Wormald Brothers, Melbourne. He spent some time in the drawing office working on sprinkler system layouts and then moved to the Special Hazards Department. During this time Wormald began to manufacture fire extinguishers and large vehicles including fire trucks. In 1961 Barry transferred to the Wormald headquarters in Sydney because he believed it would improve his career prospects. Because he had product development skills he was transferred out of Special Hazards, to look after general product development as a corporate function.

In 1964 he was appointed as Associate Director and in 1970 he was appointed Technical Director. He was now directing all of the company's technical operations, including engineering standards, design standards and manuals. In 1974 Barry was appointed as Technical Director – Fire Engineering where he was responsible for reporting on research and development on fire protection worldwide. In 1982 he was made a Fellow of the Society of Fire Protection Engineers, USA. He was the first Fellow in Australia, in fact, the first Fellow outside of the USA.

In 1990 Tyco International Pty Ltd purchased Wormald and Barry was made Technical Director for Tyco.

In the same year Barry was awarded the Order of Australia Medal in the General Division for services to industry.

After finishing his career as a full time employee with Wormald / Tyco in the late 1990's, Barry continued for some time as a consultant to them. At the time of interviewing, he planned to continue some consulting work and to write up technical notes for various groups before tapering off into full retirement.

Barry was a member of many committees and groups, some of which he continued after his retirement. Over his career he noted many changes in the field of fire protection, especially in the area of training and qualifications. When he began, fire protection engineers were drawn out of all of the engineering disciplines, but now many universities offer at least BSc or BE programs in fire protection engineering. During his career, Barry has travelled the world doing courses, research and giving lectures.

Included among Barry's achievements are the design and commissioning of installations for wide-bodied air craft hangers, high-expansion foam systems, Halon 1301 systems, design and production of fire extinguishers and the development of replacements for Halon 1301 systems, leading to INERGEN breathable inert gas.

Prepared by Patricia Taaffe, February 2003 from oral history interview conducted on 28.04.99.